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XL,

THE SHADOW
AND
SORROW OF SAVANNAH.

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Preached in the Presbyterian Church  
AT WAYNESVILLE, Ga., OCTOBER 8th, 1854.  
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MESSRS. SCARLETT, McDONALD & HULL:

*Dear Sirs:—*

Since other congregations, beside the ones you represent, have expressed a desire to publish my sermon on the Stricken City, I yield it to your hands, fearing you may be disappointed in the reading of it, yet hoping that some of its sentiments, may incline its readers to seek the ennobling influences to be found in "the house of mourning."

Respectfully,

Your Pastor in the Lord,

JAS. F. WAITE.

THE  
HOUSE IN THE SUNSHINE;  
THE  
HOUSE IN THE SHADOW.

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*"It is better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting."*—Ecc. vii. 2.

WHILE a sudden and severe calamity is the theme of every conversation, it may be well that our Sabbath thoughts should likewise meditate upon the shadow and the sorrow of Savannah.

There is a shadow over the land, and we hear a voice as the voice of God in the darkness, repeating in solemn power, his words of old,—*"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. For sorrow is better than laughter;—by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."*

There is yonder, not far from us, a house in that shadow, and another house in the shadow, and a thousand houses in the shadow; and mournful voices, in the wail of the youthful, and the groan of the aged, are crying,—*"We are made to be afflicted, to mourn and weep; our laughter hath been turned to mourning, and our joy to heaviness."*

Some of the hardest hearts have heeded the voice of God, and been melted by the voices of the mourners: in these our days, and in that dark shadow, they have proven the words of God to be true,—for they are better men.

A fair City, a prosperous and joyful one, the pride of its people, the pride of our commonwealth, and an ornament to the Union, a little season ago was sunny with smiles and vocal with rejoicings; the trades were in full blast, and the professions were ardently engaged in their moral and civil pursuits; her harbor was a forest of masts; multitudes of strangers and friends, from near around and far away, were entering her gates to share in her lively scenes, and the hearts of her people were glad while they spake of her praise. The ocean, the rivers and the iron roads were pouring treasures into her lap, from northern factories, eastern bazaars, southern plantations, and western granaries; and distant cities were communing with her hourly in the whispers of the telegraph. Her noble trees towered and spread their leafy boughs to shade from the midsummer sun, the children who loved them. Throngs of the happy, the jocund and careless crowded her streets the livelong day, and cheerful lights were seen at evening in every window, music was heard in the halls, the steps of the dancers were many to the sound of the music, the song and laugh rang out on the soft air, kindling the heart of the passer-by; and the old clocks in her towers too soon told the hour for parting. A right proud and glad city was she; kindly in her feelings and high minded in her dealings, looking back on her past with delight, and scanning her future with lofty hope.

Ah, was she not too forgetful of God in the midst of the happiness He had given her,—and were not those days of feasting making them a vain and reckless people, swelling their souls with a pride that brooked no fears, until they had come to think themselves and their charming city immortal? And had not their boast gone forth to the world, the proud boast that their's was the exempted city, the city of health of the Atlantic coast? Yet did the many of that fair city render unto God the praise due for the pure atmosphere, the pure wind, the pure waters, the bright days and clear nights, that had kept it so healthy for so many years? Did they ever remember him for this with any offering of

thanksgiving? Alas for them and their proud name, the Great Preserver was seldom thought of, and less seldom thanked. But God will not be forever forgotten. Forbearingly He had borne with them during the years of one generation. But the thoughtless and thankless generation were not to pass away without being made terribly aware that the issues of life and death, are in other hands than theirs,—in hands that can shadow a city at noonday, and sicken a nation with a breath,—hands that can fire the earth and sow the whirlwind over it. He that swept sunny Egypt with divers plagues for hardness of heart, hath suddenly whispered in “the still small voice” of an omnipresent death, and hath suddenly thundered in the storm,—hath spoken to the heart of our beautiful metropolis, that God is “no respecter of persons” or places,—that no spot on the earth is safe from “the chastenings of the Almighty”—that no city is covered with such an impervious panoply, nor girdled with such impenetrable bulwarks, that He cannot pierce it to its heart;—that there is no beauty too lovely for decay, and no joy too glad for a mingling of bitterness; and that the Omnipresent Hand, mixing draughts of life or death, is in the elements that every people quaff and breathe.

We speak of His judgment that has sorely stricken her and crushed her to the earth, not as that Savannah was more guilty than cities that are yet stricken less, but that the day of visitation seems to fall sooner or later, upon every community so favored and so forgetful of God:—and it may have an appropriate application to this region, whose favorite boast is—health,—but whose daily utterance is not therefore thanksgiving and praise.

That city arose one morning in all its pride and joy, and went forth to meet the day with bright looks and buoyant hearts, not thinking of danger and fearing it not. The fatal casualties that had sometimes occurred; and the occasional deaths of the old and the young, had never, with disturbing thoughts of personal insecurity, affrighted the city out of the calmness with which it had looked upon them. The

people looked on, moved on, and forgot them. Even the burning hectic and the yellow tinging of the face of one who was sick unto death that day, did not as yet disturb its serenity. The laugh and the shout, the rattle of wheels and the tread of the walkers, the ring of metals and the rustle of fabrics, still mingled their lively sounds. But ere that day was passed, a fearful whisper arrested the movements and sounds of the city. That *one* was dying, and his physician looked on with strange fear. Dismay blanched his cheek and terror unnerved him, as he marked that deepening tinge, that frightful hue, that glowed at last before his spell-bound eye,—the tinge, the hue, the color of the Plague. There was that on that death-bed, from which the whole city bounded as a man would bound from a crouching tiger. A cry burst from that death-room, that was resounded on thousands of quivering lips. And a shock was felt there that trembled in the hearts of the city from its centre to its suburbs. A flood of revulsion began at that house, that suddenly rolled its billows over a score of thousands, overwhelming their fairest joys, and burying many forever away from the world. And all the people saw with eyes of horror, that “the Pestilence that walketh in darkness,” had noiselessly shadowed the city, and was gathering the fearful folds of its subtle network over their houses and around their limbs. Oh heaven! how long had it hovered there?—how long had it tainted the air they had breathed, and poisoned the waters they drank? and how many seeds of death had they already inhaled and imbibed? They could not hold the shadowy form of the Pestilence to question it,—they heard only the answer of their fears.

They had cause for dismay. The Destroyer was brooding over the whole city; for it scattered its deaths on every part,—as though a dark dire cloud had settled from the skies upon the whole, and darted its lightnings upon all below it, in a shower of thunderbolts. No ward was so beautiful, no street was so favored, as to be safe from its bolts. No mansion was too grand, no hovel too squalid, to be reached by the hot grasp of the omnipresent death.



No man was too known or unknown,—no hearth was too blest, no household too loving, no fane was too sacred, for the lightnings of the Pestilence. No face was fair enough, no heart was light enough, no soul was pure enough, to win its withdrawal. Pierced in the house, blasted in the street, stricken in the church, and smitten in the prison, the scene was like a battle-field, when the sudden shots felled to the earth the strong and weak, the youth and veteran, the brave and coward, the officer and private, and while too their swords and shields availed them not. This was a war between God and man. And it seemed that as well might human arms ward off the thunderbolts of heaven, as that human efforts—(they were many and manifold,) could avert the fever-bolts of that omnipotent death.

A few days afterward, and no city of modern times was so desolate. Her coronal of glory had fallen for a season from her brow. A melancholy mournfulness had overspread the face of all things. The offices were closed, and the workshops were stilled. The houses were silent, and the streets deserted. The fleet had fled, and lengthened trains were speeding away and away with flying multitudes. 15,000 of her sons and daughters, with affrighted looks and sick at heart, fled from her arms; yet the lightnings of the Pestilence, flashing far, felled many in the path of their flight. A few thousands were left, lonely-looking as the lepers in the deserted Assyrian Camp;—they were either hidden in houses of mourning, or hurrying back and forth from the death-bed to the grave. As one passed another, every eye was tearful, and every step sounded sadly on the pavement. They listened, but the music and singing were hushed, and they heard instead the moan of the dying and the wail of the bereaved. Not a light foot, not a light laugh, not a light word, could they hear, for there was not a light heart there to bear them. They looked, one in one street and two in another,—but the doors were closed, and the curtains were drawn on all the windows; a weary air of silent desolation pervaded the houses by day, and at night the lower stories were all in the dark, while pale

lights gleamed sadly in the upper chambers all the night long. They looked on the noble trees, but the children who loved them played not under their shade; yet many of them reposed in the dreamless slumber, under the ground shadowed by their mournful branches.—Now the solemn silence of the hushed city is broken, and here a brief procession and there a solitary hearse, moves slowly to the grave. Now again all is still,—until the deathly stillness is again disturbed by other funeral trains, or the dashing from house to house of a care-worn doctor, or the hurried tread of a heart-worn minister of God. And over it all, the deep slow, heavy strokes of those old clocks in the towers, tell to the mourning city,—only how slowly the hours, days, nights, weeks, and months, are passing away.

Is the picture a dark one? Is the house in the shadow? Hapless Savannah,—once the house in the sunshine,—other clouds have more deeply darkened the shadow around thee! A Hurricane and Deluge swept her with destructions; wrecked the few vessels at her wharves,—overflowed fields in her neighbourhood that would be pestilent after the storm,—prostrated her grand old oaks,—strewed her streets with rubbish,—unroofed many of her dwellings,—and flooded many more with water that will mould and mildew many a day.

To die in such a storm,—oh who could tell its horror! yet the last sounds that many heard were the roars of the boisterous winds, and their last look was upon a stormy world. No sunshine—to lighten up the fading eye, no beautiful sky and no flowery scene, to win a thought from death,—for the house was in the shadow. During a dark day, and a darker night, a dreary desolation stared in many a dying eye. And how drearily fell those melancholy sounds and melancholy sights, upon the widow in her woe,—upon the orphans in their tearful loneliness,—upon the childless and companionless in their echoing houses,—when the winds came howling round, and the rains came driving in, and the trees went crashing down! No ray from a sunny heaven beamed upon the faces of their de-

parted,—the shadow lay gloomily on them,—and the sacred stillness of the death-chamber, was rudely disturbed by the outcries of the warring winds and waters.

Ah friends, look now upon broken-hearted Savannah! If in by-gone days, hers was “the house of feasting,” is she not now “the house of mourning.” Alas,—once the house in the sunshine—now the house in the shadow.

Yet, in the truth of God, it has been “better” for very many to have gone to her as “the house of mourning,” than as heretofore to her as the “house of feasting.” As long as they live, they will never cease to be affected by the chastening, purifying, hallowing, humbling, softening, refining, tendering, melting, exalting impressions, received under that shadow, at that threshold of sorrow. They can never forget the terrible earnestness of death, nor the touching trials of bereavement. They will ever remember the heavenward look of the Dying; to the Place of their only help and hope,—and the appalling gaze with which many looked their last upon the earth. They will never see a corpse nor glance into a grave again, without a full heart of saddening feeling that they never felt before. An earth that can decay, will have lost much of its attractions. A world whose hollowness can be so suddenly unmasked, will have lost much of its pleasure. A world beyond, that can at any day become so solemnly distinct, will have attracted daily many a more earnest eye to its mysteries. And they will never regret the toilsome days and sleepless nights, passed at the sick-bed,—the death-bed, and the grave; but will ever remember the weariness and tears of those solemn times, as the most manly mementos of life in earnest.—They will evermore be more glad,—albeit with a shaded gladness,—that they have wept with those who weep, than that they had rejoiced with those who once rejoiced, that they have worked for the suffering, and have solaced the sorrowing, than that they had formerly feasted with them in convivial festivities. And they must henceforth feel, much more than they ever felt before,—like Shadrack, Meshech, and Abednego,—that the lives that have passed

through such a fiery furnace, belong sacredly to the God who spared them, and are made much too precious by the refining fire, to be frittered away as they had been by the vanities of the world. Just so much as they have been darkened by the shadow and in contact with the sorrow, will they feel that their lives are a new thing to themselves higher and of higher aims than they had before been conscious of.

Under such an awful visitation of a chastening God, none in their senses, could have had the hardihood to murmur to His face, or to "say unto God,—what doest thou!" And if hushed, mute with awe in the heavier woe, will they not ever after be silent in the lighter affliction? If forgetful before, that the Owner of the Elements moved among them with silent forbearance, delicately handling their subtle fluids for the safety of those who breathed and quaffed them,—if forgetful of Him because He was unrevealed and forbearing, now that He has manifested Himself to them in fearful nearness among necessary elements that He can again mingle into fatal portions,—long will they feel Him very near—while ever the waters glide, and the winds play, and the clouds float, in dreamy delusiveness before their eyes;—more so, when those waters storm, and those winds rage, and those clouds overshadow the earth.

Among those who have been "bettered" by going to "the house of mourning," surely are the members of the Young Men's Benevolent Association. There was something better in those young men than they themselves had been aware of. Hitherto it seemed as if I know not how many of them had only a look for the present, a search for the pleasant, a smile for the merry and a laugh for the jest;—if indeed some of them did not lead less innocent lives. But there was something better in the lightest, gayest, hardest-hearted, deep within them, hidden there, gems of diamond value, undiscovered until now,—tears,—sympathy—solemn thoughts—and the soul's noble longings. That brave band of young men, declining to fly even from such frightful danger while their fellow-citizens might need



their services in life's extremest need,—hazarding lives of promise, and jeopardizing all wordly hopes, unflinchingly attending the steps of the Pestilence, and steadily carrying pestilential bodies to the place of the Dead, speaking touchingly kind words to the mourners, while mourners of house-hold woe themselves perhaps,—unweariedly waiting upon the wants of the dying, and raining tears from the heart upon the graves of the Dead,—waiting, working, walking, night and day, up to this very day,—Young Life dutifully treading in the footsteps of Death, to comfort the hearts it had crushed, and to cover the graves it had opened, at a fearful hazard,—is the sublimest spectacle of moral youth, and one of the noblest in Southern history.—That tenderness of feeling for the sorrows of others will do them good. That sharing of sympathy through a long dark lonely season will do them good. That flow of tears will do them good. The fountain in the strong heart opened by the rod in the hand of God,—like the waters gushing from the stricken rock in the desert,—will never be sealed again, but will follow on the path of life, and only cease to flow when the heart crumbles into dust at the end of the path. That looking into Death as into a looking-glass will do them good. The mirror cannot be broken, nor entirely dimmed. It will continue to reflect “the house of mourning,” the Hearse, and “the City of the Dead,” to their latest day. That opening of the volume of solemn thoughts within them, will do them good. The book cannot be closed. Mysterious hands will hold it open, until its page of sorrow, its page of mourning, its page of pestilence, its statistics of the fever, its notices of the Dead, its meditations upon death, its memories of wasted years, its thoughts on the hazards, the brevity, the uses of life, its reflections upon eternal solemnities, and all its other sacred pages, are read a thousand times. That awakening of the noble longing—“may I die the death of the Righteous, and may my last end be like his,” will do them good. They have found the better parts of themselves; have found the secrets of moral serenity, have sounded the depths of hearts deeper

than they thought, where deeply down is "the well of salvation,"—and these will not be all lost again. God bless them.

Another band of heroic men was there, who dared to enter the awful house of mourning, and all of them are bettered by it, some of them in the world beyond,—some of them while yet in this. The greatest wear upon any, was upon their bodies and minds. They comprehended all the danger, and prepared manfully for the struggle that would call for all their liberality and bravery, for all their strength and some of their lives. Closing their account-books, they offered their services and lives, and struggled all the day and all the night to answer the thousand calls. Out and in, out and in, a hundred times a day, a hundred times a night,—too intense to be tired, too thoughtful of others to be thoughtful for themselves, sleeplessly watching the changes of life and death, patiently hearing the wild beseechings of parents or children, they never rested even when exhausted nature snatched a moment's sleep. They felt all this, not merely bodily, but morally too. Ordinary diseases and deaths may, as it is said, harden a physician's feelings; but seeing, as they saw there, Death like a Giant striding through the streets of the city, crushing all lives and breaking all hearts, in its resistless march, and breaking over their most manful efforts to arrest its progress, beholding so many of their patients die before their eyes, despite the racking of their minds and their sleepless vigilance, for them, must have broken down their very hearts, and bowed them lowly before him the Almighty, with whom they were consciously struggling. With the lives of thousands, and the hopes of other thousands, in their hands to grapple with the Pestilence, in the despairing endeavor to bind the hands of God, venturing their very lives in the fearful encounter, they were filled with an awe they can never forget, and they are marked by scars in the strife which can never be erased. When the cloud is overpast, a shadow fringed with light, will still mantle their hearts. The memory of this darksome season with the holy reflec-

tions it must suggest, will mellow the after life of those yet living. May they live long and enjoy from Heaven and their fellow men the reward of their devotion. Alas that so many of the devoted have died. They braved "the Pestilence that walketh in darkness," in a thousand places, and at last were themselves trampled in the dust, in the struggle to save their fellow-men. Yet, praised be Providence, (we weep while we are thankful,) that they were there to save so many lives by such glorious deaths. Savannah, in grateful affection, will weep many tears, many years, at the monument that she will raise over the dust of her Martyrs,—her Wildman, and Harris, and Wells, and Schley, and Ellis, and Hartridge, and Hollis, and Brantly the generous stranger.

United to these names in the affectionate memory of the Stricken City, will be those heroes in death, Barron and Gartland, and our own beloved Presbyterian—Burroughs,—who, as members of another band of brave hearts, carried from house to house, everywhere and at all times, on earnest lips in prayers and persuasions, the one only hope to the dying, the one only solace to the mourning. The piety in their hearts was not misspent. The words that bid the christian not be afraid,—that led the penitent to trust,—and softened the wild grief of the bereaved, that they might not mourn as those without hope,—were words not misplaced. They were eloquent in their pulpits before, but their low-breathed words amid the surroundings of death, were by far more powerfully more touchingly eloquent now. The living ministers of God there now, will be listened to hereafter as men who have been tried, and not found wanting. They will seem nearer, dearer, more like Fathers than ever before, to the City of Sorrow, whose sons and daughters they prayed with, wept over, and mourned for, as their own children. Henceforth they will preach the word of God with a new-found depth of utterance, found by their own hearts, in depths of woe, never uncovered before, whose gloom no lights of this world could brighten, and only the distant stars in "the heaven

of heavens." And each dead one, though dead, yet speaketh, will ever speak as sweet voices from the grave.

The Union too, of which Savannah is an ornament and credit, has looked with a myriad eyes in sorrowing sympathy upon the afflicted city. Her own children, who for good reasons fled before the face of the Pestilence, remembered her distress with an overflow of liberality; a hearty offering to their brethren whom illness or duty bound there in their overshadowed homes. And the hearts of sister cities, the hearts likewise of many a hamlet, stretched forth in tender feelings and generous offerings to the city in the Shadow. Altogether that universal sympathy will "better" all the Union,—will elevate its character, and overspread it with solmen reflections that will be like "the bread cast upon the waters, that will be seen and gathered after many days." And that \$30,000, all acknowledge is better spent in the House of Mourning, than it would have been in the House of Feasting. It has done more good, and gained more thanks. It has brightened more hearths, and lightened more hearts. It will never be regretted, never wished back; for it is a giving that doth not impoverish, and addeth no sorrow thereto. It is more praise-worthy in the donors, more acceptable to men, and more blessed of Heaven. And the cheerful givers will long feel much better satisfied, if not more abundantly repaid, for sending it to the House in the Shadow, than lavishing a like sum in a House in the Sunshine. But they will be repaid many fold. For "giving to the poor is lending to the Lord."—One beautiful tribute, this instance has paid to humanity. Sympathy in others' sorrows, like this money, is national, not sectional, all its forms stamped with one face, and with wings that overfly the Union. Unrestricted by state lines, unaffected by diversity of sentiments, blessings from the lips and money from the hands, have freely flowed together from the North as well as the South, to where the stranger and acquaintance, the opponent and friend, were alike in sorrow. May this universal sympathy in each others sorrows, work a like universal charity towards all their other



infirmities. For all, all their lives, move under a shadow, and seeing each other but dimly, ought not to judge of each other too strongly.

Now let us hope that if the dead died under the Shadow, it was under a cloud with an upper side of light. And may those who mourn, mourn under the cloud with an upper side of light. For the clouds of life, like the clouds of the sky in the day-time, will, to the christian, if dark on the under side, be brightened on the other side, by the Sun shining from the heavens above it. Alas, that to some persons, the cloud of death should be a cloud in the night all dark, both sides dark.

And you who have seen the shadow from afar,—fear before God, and hush the proud boast; be not insensible to the nigh presence of Jehovah, nor indifferent to the nearness of death, lest the Divine Hand commingle the elements around *you* in wrath. And go ye,—the oftener the better,—to “the House of Mourning,” rather than to “the House of Feasting;” for the heart gathers only selfishness and discontent in the Sunny House, but melts into charity and contentment in the House of Shadows.—Sympathy with sorrow tenders the heart and chastens the soul. Smiles too often harden the heart as sunshine hardens the clay. But tears soften the heart, as the shower moistens the clay.

*Brunswick, Geo., Oct. 7, 1854.*





